

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9011
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 5434

BOGOTA FOR ASSTANT SECRETARY VAKY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON DEMARCHE ON ELECTORAL PROCESS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE RICHARDSON AND
AMBASSADOR GANZALEZ MADE FIRM DEMARCHES REGARDING FUTURE
OF ECUADOREAN ELECTORAL PROCESS DURING VISITS ON SUPREME
COUNCIL MEMBER GENERAL GUILLERMO DURAN ARCENTALES AND FONMIN
JOSE AYALA LASSO. BOTH DURAN AND AYALA WERE REASSURING
REGARDING GOE DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE WITH RETORNO PROCESS
BY FINDING LEGAL SOLUTION TO PRESENT PROBLEM IN SUPREME
ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL. END SUMMARY.

2. PROMPTED BY INCREASING LOCAL CONCERN ABOUT THE INTEGRITY
OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS GROWING OUT OF THE VOTE SCRUTINY
PROCEDURE, VISITING AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGEELLIOT REICHARDSON
TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY PROTOCOL CALLS
ON SUPREME COUNCIL MEMBER GENERAL GUILLERMO DURAN ARCENTALES

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AND FONMIN JOSE AYALA LASSON ON AUGUST 3 TO EXPRESS OFFICIAL
US DISQUIET OVER WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING HERE.

3. AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON TOLD HIS INTERLOCUTORS INTHE
TWO SEPARATE MEETINGS THAT THE USG HAD BEEN FOLLOWING
CLOSELY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARMED FORCES PLAN TO RETURN
ECUADOR TO CIVILIAN RULE. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE MANNER

IN WHICH THE JULY 16 ELECTION WAS CARRIED OUT HAD GENERATED A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF ENTHUSIASM AND GOOD WILL TOWARD ECUADOR. HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED, SINCE HIS ARRIVAL IN ECUADOR HE HAD BEEN DISMAYED TO FIND A GROWING SENSE OF DOUBT AMONG NEARLY ALL HE HAD SPOKEN TO ABOUT THE GOOD FAITH OF THE GOE IN MOVING TOWARD DEMOCRACY. ALTHOUGH AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ELECTIONS WERE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE COUNTRY CONCERNED, IT WOULD BE NAIVE TO ASSUME THAT THE USG WOULD LOOK UPON THE PROCESS WITH INDIFFERENCE AND THAT ITS FUTURE POLICY TOWARD ECUADOR WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY WHAT MIGHT OCCUR HERE. FOR THIS REASON, HE STATED HIS DESIRE UPON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON TO REPORT TO THE HIGHEST USG LEVELS ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN ECUADOR.

4. FONMIN AYALA REPLIED THAT HE COULD UNDERSTAND USG CONCERN OVER THE MATTER. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE US, AS A GOOD NEIGHBOR, COULD NOT BE INDIFFERENT TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN ITS FRIEND'S HOUSE DOWN THE STREET. AYALA WAS CATEGORIC IN ASSURING THAT THE POLITICAL PROCESS NOW UNDER WAY WOULD PROCEED AS SCHEDULED AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MODIFICATIONS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE, BUT SAID THAT IT WAS A REACTION TO SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH, IN HIS OPINION, SHOULD NOT BE GENERALIZED. HE PREDICTED THAT SPIRITS WILL CALM IN A FEW DAYS AS THE PROBLEMS ARE WORKED OUT, AND WHATEVER
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THE RESULT, THE GOE IS ABSOLUTELY DECIDED TO GIVE UP POWER TO THE WINNER OF THE SECOND ROUND. HE REPEATED THAT WHATEVER THE RESULT THE PROCESS WOULD NOT BE STOPPED BECAUSE THE ECUADOREAN PEOPLE WOULD SIMPLY NOT ACCEPT A BOLIVIAN SOLUTION.

5. AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ NOTED THAT HE COULD PERSONALLY VERIFY THE POSITIVE FEELING IN WASHINGTON TOWARD ECUADOR DURING THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE JULY 16 ELECTION. AS EVIDENCE OF OUR CONCERN FOR RETURN TO DEMOCRACIES IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO EXPLAIN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD BOLIVIA TO PRESIDENT POVEDA WHEN HE PRESENTED CREDENTIALS ON JULY 31 AND TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE STATE OF THE ECUADOREAN PROCESS. WHAT HE HEARD FROM POVEDA WAS REASSURING, HOWEVER, HE WAS DISTURBED BY THE ACTIONS OF SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL IN NULLIFYING VOTES WHOLESAL AND BY REPORTS OF SOME SERIOUS NULLIFICATIONS TO COME. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE SET WAS APPLYING VERY RIGID TECHNICAL AND PROCEDURAL CRITERIA TO ITS VOTE CERTIFICATION, BUT WONDERED WHETHER IN THE PROCESS OF FOLLOWING EVERY TORTUOUS BEND OF THE REGULATIONS, IT WOULD NOT CONCLUDE BY THWARTING THE WILL

OF THE PEOPLE.

6. FONMIN AYALA ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS A DANGER AND SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS ECUADOR PUT TOO MUCH STORE IN PROCEDURE. HOWEVER, IN FAIRNESS TO THE SET, HE INDICATED THAT IT WAS FACED WITH A DILEMMA IN BALANCING OFF RESPECT FOR REGULATIONS AND RESPECT FOR THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. HE THOUGHT THAT THE PROBLEM OF IRREGULARITIES AND NULLIFICATIONS WOULD BE ADDRESSED BY CONFOKING NEW ELECTIONS IN THOSE PLACES WHERE IT WAS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL TO THE FINAL RESULT.

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7. AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON OBSERVED THAT IN HIS EXPERIENCE IF THERE WERE MERELY TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, CANCELLED VOTES WOULD CUT BOTH WAYS, AND WOULD NOT AFFECT THE FINAL RESULT. WHAT IS WORRISOME, HE SAID, IS THE BOLIVIAN EXAMPLE WHERE GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF THE PROCESS HAD ESTABLISHED FRAUD OR A STRONG PRESUMPTION OF FRAUD.

8. AYALA REPLIED THAT IN THE BOLIVAIN CASE THERE WAS FRAUD FROM THE OUTSET, BUT IN THE ECUADOREAN CASE ONLY MISTAKEN PROCEDURES. HE PREDICTED THAT THE FINAL RESULT WOULD NOT CHANGE, CERTAINLY NOT ROLDOS' FININSHING FIRST, AND THOUGHT THAT SIXTO DURAN WOULD WIND UP SECOND. HE ALSO SAID THAT THERE SHOULD NOT BE ANY UNDUE DELAY IN RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

9. IN RESPONSE TO THE SAME EXPRESSION OF CONCERN, GENERAL DURAN ARCENTALES STATED THAT HE COULD BE "EMPHATIC AND ABSOLUTE" IN ASSURING THAT THE DECISION OF THE ARMED FORCES TO RESTORE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WOULD BE KEPT AS PROMISED. HE CHARGED THAT THE POLITICIANS THEMSELVES WERE RESPONSIBLE

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FOR THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS BECAUSE THEIR MONITORING OF THE VOTING TABLES, WHERE THE ERRORS ORIGINATED, WAS INSUFFICIENT. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAD ESTABLISHED THE SET AS THE AUTHORITY ON THE ELECTIONS, WHAT HAD HAPPENED COULD LEAD TO A DANGEROUS SITUATION. HOWEVER, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THIS PROBLEM COULD BE OVERCOME EITHER THROUGH THE CONVOCAION OF NEW ELECTIONS I THE CHALLENGED WARDS, OR THROUGH THE SEARCH FOR A "LEGAL REMEDY" IF THE QUANTITY OF VOTES IN QUESTION WAS NOT TOO GREAT. COMPLICATING THE MATTER, HOWEVER, WAS THE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION NOW BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES. NEVERTHELESS, HE HAD SOUNDED OUT ARMY OFFICIALS ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION AND FOUND THEM UNANIMOUS IN THEIR DETERMINATION TO RESPECT THE RESULTS. BECAUSE OF THIS, HE ASKED AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON TO INFORM PRESIDENT CARTER WHEN HE RETURNED TO WASHINGTON THAT ECUADOR IS CONTINUING TOWARD DEMOCRACY.

10. DURAN MUSED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE CONCERN OF THE US BOUT THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA. HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT THAT ALTHOUGH DE FACTO GOVERNMENTS ARE SOMETIMES NECESSARY, THEY ARE NOT IDEAL. FOR THIS REASON, THE ARMED FORCES DECISION IS IRREVERSIBLE. HE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN SUSPECTED OF HARBORING GOLPE PLANS FOR WOME TIME, AND FOR THAT REASON WHEN HE RECENTLY DECLARED HIMSELF ABSOLUTELY IN FAVOR OF THE RETORNO PROCESS THE STATEMENT HAD MORE OF AN IMPACT THAN THOSE OF ADMIRAL POVEDA. IF HE HAD WANTED TO BECOME SOLE DICTATOR, HE COULD HAVE DONE IT SOME TIME AGO AND NOT HAVE WAITED. BUT HE HAD NO SUCH PLANS IN THE PAST, NOR DOES HE HAVE THEM NOW.

1. HE CONCLUDED REPEATING THAT THE DECISION ON THE RETORNO

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IS IRREVERSIBLE. ALTHOUGH THE GOE WAS HAVING PROBLEMS, A LEGAL WAY WOULD BE FOUND--AND QUICKLY---TO REMEDY THE SITUATION. HE PROMISED THAT GOE WILL KEEP OVERCOMING OBSTACLES UNTIL IT ACHIEVES ITS GOAL OF HANDING OVER POWER

TO A NEW GOVERNMENT.

12. COMMENT: THE RESPONSES TO THE DEMARCHE ARE ENCOURAGING, WHILE NOT BEING ENTIRELY REASSURING. SENOIR FOREIGN MINISTRY PERSONNEL, REPRESENTED BY CAREER DIPLOMAT AYALA, ARE OBVIOUSLY AS CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IS PERCEIVED TO BE HAPPENING HERE AS OTHER CIVILIANS AYALA PUT THE BEST FACE ON IT, BUT ASIDE FROM HIS ABILITY TO POINT OUT POTENTIAL FOREIGN REACTION TO RETORNO DEVELOPMENTS, HE IS OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE OF THOSE WHO MAY WISH TO DESTROY THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. DURAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS A CONTINUAL PLOTTER AND OPPORTUNIST WHO COULD EXPECT TO BE FOUND AT THE VERY CENTER OF ANY CONSPIRACY OF THIS NATURE. BECAUSE OF HIS DEVIOSNESS, HIS PROTESTATIONS ABOUT HIS COMMITMENT TO THE RETORNO, WHICH MAY BE VALID, MUST BE TAKEN WITH A GRAIN OF SALT. HIS ATTEMPT TO PLACE THE BLAME ON THE CIVILIAN POLITICIANS IS LUDICROUS; HOWEVER, THE NEAR ABSENCE OF ANY OTHER DEFENSIVE REACTION IS SOMEWHAT ENCOURAGING. HE DID SAY ALL THE RIGHT THINGS, AFTER ALL.

13. GOE CONTINUES TO COURT THE GOOD OPINION OF THE US AND BECAUSE OF THIS THE DEMARCHES AT THIS TIME MAY HAVE SOME BENEFICIAL EFFECT. WE DOUBT, DESPITE THE STRANGE BEHAVIOR OF THE SET, WHETHER THE MILITARY HAS REACHED A CONSENSUS ON THE ELECTION, AND US REACTION WILL CONTINUE TO BE A STRONG FACTOR TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR.
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